

Soil Samples, Public Meetings Part of the Detroit Lead Deposition Screening Project

Detroit, Mich.

February 2003



In this fact sheet you will find information on:

- Neighborhood soil sampling
- Public meetings
- EPA as your new neighbor
- Master Metals cleanup
- Important names and phone numbers

EPA neighborhood soil sampling in March-April

EPA needs your help to undertake a Lead Deposition Screening Study around a former industrial site located in the neighborhood of the Sojourner Truth Housing Project. We want to take soil samples at approximately 75 locations in the Krainzwood neighborhood near Master Metals, a former lead smelter. The samples will help EPA find out if further cleanup is needed outside the industrial lot. Private sampling done by the Detroit Free Press newspaper did show high levels of lead on some blocks beyond the former smelter grounds. But it's not known if the lead came from Master Metals, lead paint in homes, leaded gasoline or some other source. Local health groups also recently tested neighborhood children 6 and under for lead. These blood tests along with soil samples may help answer some of the questions from the Master Metals situation.

EPA workers are fanning out through the neighborhood talking with residents. We will have a few questions to ask you both about your property and a few health questions about you and your family. We will also need permission from the property owners to take soil samples. After the access agreements are signed allowing us to test the soil, EPA workers and contractors will return to the neighborhood to take the actual samples. They will be wearing protective gear such as white coveralls, helmets, boots, gloves and breathing masks. They are required to wear this safety gear because they will be disturbing the soil. Residents do not face any risks during this time. EPA is asking for your cooperation and patience during these disruptions.

Lots of meetings will give residents a chance to weigh in

EPA along with many other local, county and state agencies will be meeting with each other and with residents during this work. We intend to meet regularly with local citizens, neighborhood groups, churches, schools and YOU. EPA wants to hear your concerns and questions regarding the lead contamination. Watch for meeting notices through newspapers, city offices, area libraries and community groups. We also hope to work closely with your local block captains to get the word out.

Look for meetings with neighborhood groups to be held in the coming weeks. These will be followed by a larger neighborhood meeting and smaller more localized gatherings both during day and night hours near your home.

Contact us, we'll be your neighbors

EPA will soon be your actual neighbor. We are opening an office during the sampling project at 17825 Ryan Road. This will be our central location for our equipment and workers. The office will be staffed by a community involvement person to help you.

We welcome the opportunity to be in your neighborhood working on investigating the potential lead problem in the soil. A local telephone number is set up for you to call if you need to contact us. Your main contact is Dave Novak, community involvement coordinator. His number in Chicago is toll free (800) 621-8431 ext. 67478 or e-mail at novak.dave@epa.gov. Locally, Dave or his alternate can be reached at (313) 386-2871. You will be able to leave messages when no one is in the office. You will also be able to get information from city, county and state agencies such as the Wayne County Health Department or the Detroit Department of Health through this same number. The agencies working with us are also listed on page 4. You are invited to contact them directly with your concerns if you wish.

Detroit battles lead problem

Lead is considered a dangerous pollutant. It can enter the body by breathing, eating and through the skin. Common sources are leaded gasoline, lead paint chips and factory smoke. Lead gasoline was banned in the 1970s. But lead from exhaust fumes can settle in the soil for many years. Lead paint was also discontinued. However, children can be poisoned by eating paint chips or breathing paint dust in older homes. Immediate contact with unsafe lead levels can cause skin and eye irritation, headaches and coughing. Long-term exposure can cause lower IQ, kidney and brain damage, birth defects and premature births. New research also shows lead may cause violent, criminal behavior in youths. Children, pregnant women, the elderly and people with low immunity are especially prone to lead poisoning. Past testing shows blood poisoning is a serious problem among Detroit's children. The Detroit Lead Deposition Screening Project effort is part of a new drive to fight the city's lead problem. This year, two city agencies were also awarded \$3 million in federal grants to remove lead from older homes and apartments. The money will also pay for an education campaign.

EPA orders new cleanup at Master Metals site

A dozen companies - known in EPA jargon as responsible parties - have been ordered to clean the lead from the Master Metals site. The nearly 2-acre site is located at 4700 - 4740 E. Nevada Ave. in Detroit. Samples from the southeast corner of the 4740 address showed lead levels up to 75 times the amount considered safe by scientists. The companies were ordered to share the \$878,000 cleanup cost.

The project involves several steps:

- Remove soil that exceeds the safety level for lead. Treat the soil and then haul it away.

- Remove concrete paving and any contaminated soil underneath.
- Replace the removed soil with clean dirt and gravel.
- Tear down an office building remaining on the site.

The work at the Master Metals site will take place at the same time we are doing the neighborhood soil sampling. There will be a lot of activity going on in your neighborhood. Your safety is our main concern. We will do everything we can to work with you during this project.

Here's how the soil sampling will work

EPA is ready to do the sampling. We have taken a map of the Krainzwood neighborhood and laid out two imaginary lines that cross on the Master Metals site. The actual sampling holes will be dug along these two lines. The longest line extends two miles downwind from Master Metals in an east-northeasterly direction. This line is longer because that is the way the wind generally blows. The other sampling lines are a mile long.

Along these lines, sampling points will be marked on the ground about every two blocks. An imaginary circle will be drawn 75 feet out around each of these sample points. Workers will then take four or five samples within each circle. The samples themselves will consist of a bucket-sized hole about 3 inches deep. If we find lead "hot spots," more sample holes may be dug later.

EPA will also look at records on the lead smelter's smokestacks. We will try to figure out where the wind may have carried the lead. Experts say lead does not fall evenly over an area. That means one block may have high levels of lead while two blocks away little pollution is found.

You can help us on this project too. If you or someone you know worked at Master Metals, we would like to learn more about the operation there, such as where the buildings were, how many stacks or chimneys were used, etc. Any information you can provide will help make the neighborhood safer. Please give us a call; we would like to talk with you.

How did this problem happen?

Forty-some years ago people didn't realize how dangerous lead could be. Lead smelters were often built near homes. In Detroit, the Master Metals smelter ran from 1955 to 1984 under a series of owners. Residents over the years often complained about the thick, sooty smoke that belched from the smelter. Detroit and Michigan officials several times cited the smelter for violating pollution rules. Major automotive companies such as General Motors, Ford, DaimlerChrysler and Johnson Controls shipped car batteries and radiators to the smelter for recycling. Those companies are included in the list of responsible parties that will help pay for the cleanup. The owners who ran the smelter under a variety of company names include Honeywell Inc. and NL Industries Inc. The last owner is a company called 4740 E. Nevada Ave. LLC, which owns the parcel at 4740. The 4700 E. Nevada Ave. section is now owned by the state of Michigan.

In 1998-99 the responsible parties conducted a major cleanup at the site. They removed buildings, underground storage tanks and hundreds of cubic yards of contaminated soil. Last year the responsible parties were asked to complete the cleanup on the southeast corner. Officials said transients were staying in the abandoned office and children were playing on the site. Experts worried the remaining lead could move by wind, rain or vandalism.

The responsible companies delayed starting the latest cleanup phase so this February EPA had to issue a cleanup order. The responsible parties have agreed to the terms of this order and will do the required work.

Several government agencies are working with us

Some of your specific concerns may be forwarded to our partnering agencies working on this project. You are welcome to contact them directly or through EPA's neighborhood office.

- ***U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Detroit Neighborhood Office, 17825 Ryan Road***
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- ***Michigan Department of Environmental Quality***
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Patricia Thornton
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- ***Michigan Department of Community Health***
Brendan Boyle
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- ***Wayne County Department of Environment***
Bob Zabick
Phone: (313) 224-8172
24-Hour Environmental Hotline: 1-888-223-2363
- ***City of Detroit Health Department***
Phone: (313) 876-4212
- ***City of Detroit Department of Environmental Affairs***
Phone: (313) 471-5100

Remember our main goals are to address both the lead contamination and YOUR concerns. Please do not hesitate to call us. We are just around the corner working to protect you and your family's health.